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A NEGRO'S YEARS IN INDUSTRY

by Roy E. Morris
Industrial Relations Secretary
New Jersey Urban League

On the periphery of the fundamental reason - the issue of economic competition of whites against Negroes - there are other reasons sometimes given by employers for not being specific about continued utilization of Negroes in the post-war industrial scene. One of those "other reasons" appears in discussions of the psychological or emotional suitability of Negroes for permanent jobs in industry. "Doubting Thomases" who often are sincere about related problems, raise questions about the ability of the Negro worker to stick on an industrial job year after year, or, to be a stable, dependable, and competent industrial worker. They wonder if the Negro is not too new as an industrial worker to be considered a normal source of such labor.

On the other hand many Negroes are not alert to the fact that there are enviable records of Negroes who have been working in industrial plants for many years - and not only as porters either. It is timely, therefore, that our attention be directed toward the record of Mr. Charles E. Washington, a Negro, about whom an industrial plant publication ran a full page article recently. The publication, "The Calco Diamond", is a magazine published monthly by the Calco Chemical Division of the American Cyanamid Company, Bound Brook, New Jersey. Charles E. Washington is a Chief operator in the manufacture of metanitroparatoluidine - more easily referred to as N.M.B.T.

Mr. Washington has a record of more than sixteen years with the Company, and without missing a single day's work. He was working for the Crown Chemical Company in Keyport, New Jersey when that Company was developing the chemical called acetanilid. He worked so closely with that development that he calls acetanilid "his baby".

Calco bought Crown in 1926, and Mr. Washington was retained by Calco. That his reliability was recognized even at that time is evident because he remained in the plant of the Crown Company for almost a year making materials acceptable for transfer to Calco's plants in Bound Brook.

Sixteen years without missing a day's work is a very notable record. With problems of absenteeism all over the country today, this fact is significant. Moreover, the record shows that he has been late only three times. For Charles Washington this is particularly commendable because of travelling and weather conditions

around Bound Brook. The day I drove from Newark making field visits as far as Bound Brook, I found the roads continuous sheets of ice for miles. Snow was so piled that only one-lane traffic was possible on New Jersey's normally excellent double highways. Neither trains nor busses are able to keep up to schedule while such conditions prevail. Yet, the three times Mr. Washington was late, through sub-zero weather and raging snowstorms he was only about thirty minutes behind time, each time. (Mr. Washington's home is in Kearny, New Jersey; during the week he lives in Plainfield, New Jersey, nearer the plant.)

About Mr. Washington the Calco Diamond states, "He works 56 hours a week. His boss says, 'Whenever an emergency comes up you can always depend on Charlie to help out. He is always right there when you need him.'" Mr. Washington has worked in industrial plants for a long time. The statement of "his boss" speaks for itself as to his dependability and efficiency.

In 1943 Mr. Washington was lent to another division to help get some new operations under way. This was for the production of the much-discussed sulfa-drugs. He stayed there about a year, and now has been returned to his present "baby", N.M.B.T.

When the question is raised about the long range "sticktuitiveness" of Negroes in industry, the story of Charles E. Washington gives a straight answer.